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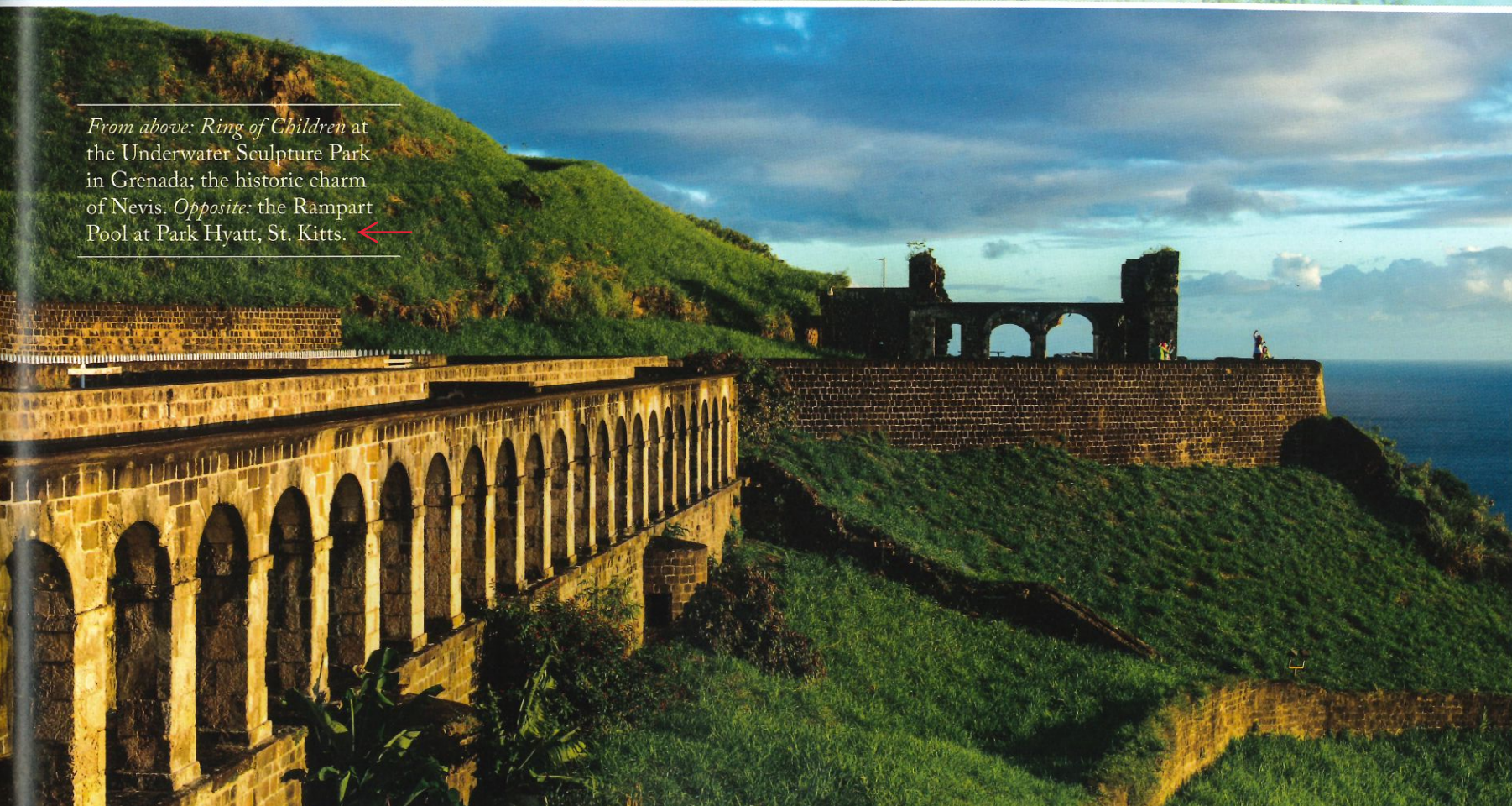
The New *Caribbean*

Not only did Maria and Irma cause significant damage in Puerto Rico, the BVI, St. Martin, and surrounding islands, the 2017 hurricane season disrupted generations-long travel patterns as sunseekers sought alternatives to their favorite beach destinations. Five places left unscathed—Grenada, Canouan, Ambergris Cay, St. Kitts, and Nevis—have seen a real surge after the storm and are quickly becoming the haute spots of the moment.





From above: Ring of Children at the Underwater Sculpture Park in Grenada; the historic charm of Nevis. Opposite: the Rampart Pool at Park Hyatt, St. Kitts. ←



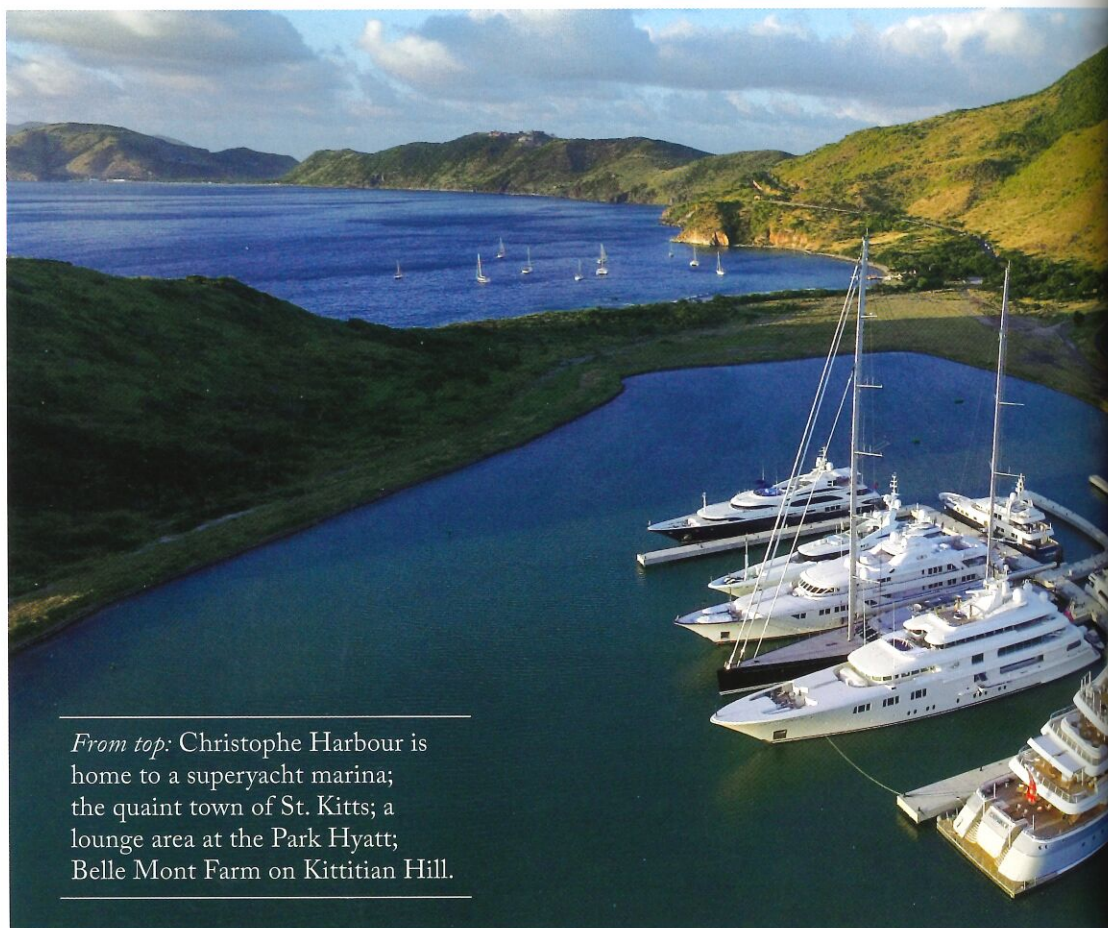
Sweet Spot

ST. KITTS

For centuries, sugar—not tourism—ruled on St. Kitts. This small Leeward Island in the Lesser Antilles had been an anomaly with its black-sand beaches, rainforests populated by vervet monkeys, and an economy solidly supported by sugarcane plantations. As the first of the Caribbean islands to be colonized by the French and British, respectively, St. Kitts—and volcanic sister island Nevis—didn't have much need for beach hotels. Then, in 2005, the government halted sugar production. Suddenly this self-contained spot with unspoiled rolling green peaks and turquoise water was ripe for development—of a certain kind.

The federation of St. Kitts and Nevis made a strategic decision to attract a high-end clientele. It established a citizen-by-investment program, and in the subsequent caravan of wealthy foreign investors was superyacht enthusiast Charles P. “Buddy” Darby III. Darby, former partner in the development company behind South Carolina’s Kiawah Island, bought 2,500 acres of coastal land and in 2008 began development of the private resort community and superyacht marina. For many reasons, St. Kitts would be the perfect yacht club destination. First, the population had long been known for their welcoming, proud, and gentle attitude. The island is home to several universities and well-preserved historical destinations including UNESCO World Heritage Site Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park. The setting checks the boxes in terms of beauty, beaches, and activities—from water sports to zip-lining—and has the potential for infrastructure on par with upscale islands like St. Barts and Antigua. Still, when Darby arrived, the canvas was blank. “When we got down here, there was hardly any development,” he recalls. “That was the good and the bad news.”

Today, Darby’s bets seem to be paying off, with stunning white megaboats docked at **Christophe Harbour** (christopheharbour.com). The marina accommodates 24 superyachts and plans for expansion during the next phase are on the drawing table. “As a superyacht owner and boater myself, I know what it takes to manage a superyacht,” says



From top: Christophe Harbour is home to a superyacht marina; the quaint town of St. Kitts; a lounge area at the Park Hyatt; Belle Mont Farm on Kittitian Hill.

Darby. “We can do more than tie up your boat and fuel you; we can take care of any need that you have.”

Boats docked in the naturally protected cove, or “hurricane hole,” are watched over not only by 24-hour security but also by an experienced ex-superyacht captain, who Darby hired to run the show.

With more than 800 linear feet of bulkhead, Christophe Harbour can accommodate vessels up to 300-foot max LOA. Private Christophe Harbour Club membership requires a \$20,000 onetime fee and \$2,500 in annual dues. Berths range from \$1.875 million to \$3.1 million. Stern-side berths and a well-placed gate ensure privacy for notable visitors, such as billionaire businessman Les Wexner, who recently stopped by.

Alongside Kempadoo, Darby and St. Kitts’ other new architects seem to have the best interest and authenticity of the special island in mind. “We have self-imposed our own regulations,” says Darby, who is set on responsible, controlled development. “If you look out 20 years from now in the rear-view mirror, hopefully you’ll see something that was built over time, with care and real value.” Darby has considered every hospitality angle, including Yu Lounge, an airport-adjacent FOB space for guests flying commercial or private.

In Christophe Harbour’s Marina Village, evocative of a grand colonial estate, visitors can peruse shops, an art gallery, an outdoor outfitter boutique, a gourmet grocery store, and a coffee kiosk. At the sleek, private Pavilion Beach Club at the gated community Sandy Bank Bay, visitors can now dip—just feet from the Caribbean Sea—in an infinity pool surrounded by white lounges and thatched pods, while sipping cabana bar cocktails. Chef Barnaby Jones, who brings Aman pedigree and a love of foraged, local ingredients, serves modern Caribbean hook-to-table fare exclusively to members for breakfast and lunch, and welcomes the public for dinner. The consciously rustic dockside bar, Salt Plage, incorporates artisanal elements such as fresh-pressed juices into its craft cocktails. Real estate offerings range from turnkey cottages to custom estates—30 of which are already available for rent when members are elsewhere. A golf course is up next.

“We’ve been selling the dream for a long time, and the reality is here now,” says Darby. “Hopefully, we’ve done it in a way that will inspire people to bring similar quality, good development practices here.” Plans for the island’s first Ritz-Carlton and Six Senses properties were announced for 2021. Clearly, an era of quiet glamour is just beginning here.



MAIN STAYS

The island's first luxury-branded beachfront resort, **Park Hyatt St. Kitts**, opened its doors in November 2017, just two months after hurricanes Irma and Maria touched down, missing St. Kitts and Nevis completely. The resort's 126 airy rooms, including 48 suites and a lavish Presidential Villa, overlook Nevis Peak, often topped with fog as in some enchanted fortress. Set off the Narrows (the channel between St. Kitts and Nevis), the atmosphere is at once intimate and fully realized, decadent and unostentatious. Ceilings are high and white shiplap is pervasive. At the adult pool, dramatic stone arches were modeled after the island's historic fort. From \$500; parkhyatt.com

The pièce de résistance at the Park Hyatt is the standalone **Miraval Life in Balance Spa**—the brand's first in this part of the world—with nine well-appointed treatment rooms spread throughout a vast indoor/outdoor facility. A maze of open-air walkways leads to relaxation areas surrounded by tropical foliage, dressing areas with saunas, and steams and soaks. Services range from floating Vasudhara Thai massage to a lavish Sojourn of Indulgence experience including a signature massage, facial, manicure/pedicure, and spa lunch. Just outside, sound meditations and yoga classes are led in a reproduced sugar mill, wide and echoing at the bottom and narrowing to an open top. Practitioners can look up through the circle to the Caribbean sky. miravalresorts.com

Before the Park Hyatt, there was **Belle**

Mont Farm on Kittitian Hill. Opened in 2014, the hotel and surrounding vacation home community sit among 400 acres of organic farmland at the bottom of Mt. Liamuiga. Billed as a farm-to-table hotel, Belle Mont Farm encompasses 40 rooms, including 33 guest houses, 6 villas, and a large farmhouse with a dramatic, 100-foot-long infinity pool that juts out toward the ocean like an offering. Accommodations have sprawling views of the water and lush forests—sometimes through open French doors—and amenities from rain showers to pulldown screens and projectors for movie watching. The aesthetic, realized by famed resort architect Bill Bensley, is at once innately Caribbean as well as modern, with navy blues, gingerbread trims, and bentwood furniture that mirrors the voluptuous landscape. Within the larger, \$600 million holistic destination Kittitian Hill, guests can access a wellness center, Irie Fields sustainable golf course, and a working farm. Focused on sustainable living, Kittitian Hill is on a mission for the cultural, economic, social, and ecological greater good. Founder and social entrepreneur Valmiki Kempadoo—who specifically chose St. Kitts for its anemic tourism industry—strives to benefit both locals and travelers by engaging Kittitian artists and artisans. Four on-site dining experiences, and one off-site beach restaurant, source from the surrounding farmland, forest, and sea, working with conscious local community farms and fisheries. During their visit, guests can snorkel at Dieppe Bay reef, work the land, or source fruit with a forager. From \$250; kittitianhill.com ▸ —N.Z.

